

**REMARKS**

The application has been amended. Claims 8-14, and 17 have been canceled. Claims 15 and 18-20 have been amended and claims 21-23 have been added. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

The Examiner has rejected claims 15 and 17-20 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by, or in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 6,264,684 to Banas et al. (hereinafter “Banas”). In view of the amendments and remarks presented herewith, this position is respectfully traversed.

Claim 15 has been amended so as to recite the step of combining a polytetrafluoroethylene tape strip and a distendible support structure where the distendible support structure forms an assembly strip. The assembly strip is then combined with a substantially continuous integral tubular body where the distendible support structure is placed in contact with the tubular body.

The Banas reference discloses a stent (distendible support structure) which is fully encapsulated within a polymeric cladding such that it may be wrapped around a tubular substrate (graft) in a helical fashion. Figures 1 and 2 of the Banas reference clearly show that the stent is completely enclosed within the cladding material prior to placement on the graft. The stent is not placed in direct contact with the graft. In each of the embodiments shown in Figures 8-11,

the wire forming the stent is encased within the polymeric cladding. In the Figure 12 embodiment of Banas, a portion of the wire forming the stent is exposed from the cladding, however, Banas fails to disclose, in any fashion, that the wire may be placed against the tubular body.

Each of the independent claims of the present invention recited that the stent is placed against the inner tubular body when the assembly strip is wrapped around the stent. Banas fails to disclose this arrangement. As such, Banas cannot anticipate the present claims.

Moreover, as may be appreciated, providing an additional layer between the stent and the inner tubular body, results in a greater cross sectional dimension than that which is achieved with the prosthesis of the present invention. The present invention provides an exposed stent on one side of the assembly strip. Thereafter, the assembly strip is wrapped around the inner tubular body forming a composite prosthesis. In all cases, the stent is completely between the PTFE tape strip and the inner tubular body without the need to interpose an additional PTFE layer therebetween. Thus, the present invention provides a composite stent/graft prosthesis where the stent is completely covered and yet provides a lower profile than that shown in the Banas reference.

As the arrangement set forth in the claims of the present invention is not disclosed, taught or suggested by Banas, it is respectfully submitted that the claims define patentably thereover.

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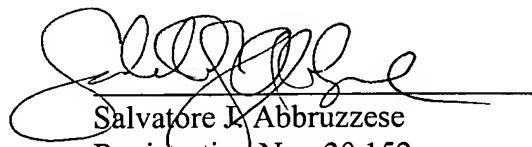
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Therefore, the application, including claims 15, 16 and 18-23, is believed to be in condition for allowance. Favorable action thereon is respectfully solicited.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge payment of any additional fees, including additional claim fees, associated with this communication, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 20-0776. Such authorization includes authorization to charge fees for extensions of time, if any, under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17 and also should be treated as a constructive petition for an extension of time in this reply or any future reply pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.136.

Should the Examiner have any questions regarding this response, the undersigned would be pleased to address them by telephone.

Respectfully submitted,



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